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Question of Cyprus

Oceans and the law of the sea

Letter dated 12 December 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I regret to inform you that the Republic of Turkey continues its provocative and unlawful actions against the Republic of Cyprus through the conduct of illegal seismic surveys in the continental shelf and exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of Cyprus.

On 18 October 2018, the Turkish State-owned survey vessel *Barbaros Hayreddin Paşa* and supporting vessels, accompanied and supported by Turkish warships, commenced seismic surveys in the southwest areas of the continental shelf/EEZ of Cyprus, including within parts of hydrocarbon exploration blocks 4 and 5 (see annex). The area has purportedly been reserved for seismic surveys by Turkey, via an unauthorized navigational warning dated 16 October, for the period from 18 October 2018 to 1 February 2019.

The aforementioned surveys constitute a violation by Turkey of the sovereign rights of Cyprus under international law and, in particular, the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the relevant provisions of which have long been crystallized into customary international law. Turkey has no legal standing whatsoever to conduct exploration activities with respect to the natural resources of the island without the express consent of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus. All seismic data collected by Turkey during those illegal and unauthorized surveys belong to the Republic of Cyprus.

What is more, the activity of the Turkish warships in the aforementioned area constitutes an abuse of the rights vested in all States by customary international law, which is also reflected in UNCLOS, and runs contrary to the rule of peaceful uses of the seas. The behaviour of Turkey has the effect of increasing tensions, putting at risk the peace and security of the region.

The position of Cyprus regarding its rights to maritime zones is reflected in my previous letters addressed to you and circulated as documents of the General Assembly. In particular, the Republic of Cyprus declared an EEZ in 2004 and has inherent rights over the continental shelf of the island of Cyprus, the outer limits of both zones being the median line with the opposite States, pending agreement to the

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contrary. In this regard, the Republic of Cyprus has signed EEZ delimitation agreements with Egypt, Lebanon and Israel, on the basis of the median line.

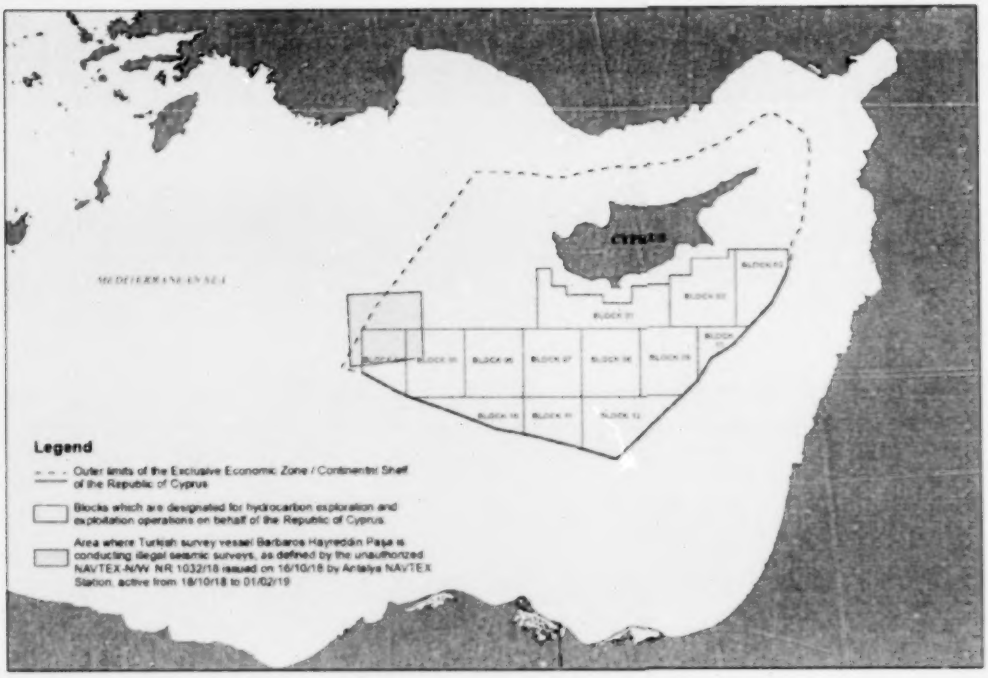
I recall, in this respect, that the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Nikos Christodoulides, in recent public statements, invited Turkey to enter into negotiations with Cyprus with a view to reaching an agreement on the delimitation of our respective maritime zones. Cyprus holds the view that the two States should engage in meaningful negotiations conducted in good faith so as to reach an agreement, as prescribed by international law, contributing, thus, to the establishment of a stable and secure environment in the eastern Mediterranean.

I take this opportunity to reiterate my Government's invitation to Turkey to delimit our respective maritime zones, in accordance with international law.

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 45 and 78, and published on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea and in the next edition of the *Law of the Sea Bulletin*.

(*Signed*) Kornelios S. **Korneliou**

Annex to the letter dated 12 December 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General


CYPRUS
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Legend
Outer limits of the Exclusive Economic Zone / Continental Shelf of the Republic of Cyprus
Blocks which are designated for hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation operations on behalf of the Republic of Cyprus.
Area where Turkish survey vessel Barbaros Hayreddin Paşa is conducting illegal seismic surveys, as defined by the unauthorized NAVTEX-NAV NR:1032/18 issued on 16/10/18 by Antalya NAVTEX Station, active from 18/10/18 to 01/02/19